

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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PRESS RELEASE

June 13, 1988

Three related exhibitions of decorative arts of the 19th and 20th centuries--principally furniture, metalwork, and pottery--open at The Cleveland Museum of Art this summer. The first, **American Arts & Crafts 1890-1920**, opening June 28, surveys the movement that created handmade objects that were popular in "progressive" American households. The second, **Art Nouveau in France**, opening July 12, explores the French variation on the Arts & Crafts theme, creating handmade objects of luxury or playfulness that contrast with the high-minded, sometimes stern, character of the American works. The third, **Bent Wood and Metal Furniture: 1850-1946**, opening August 24, chronicles the recent history of a particular kind of furniture, which traces its beginnings to an ancient craft tradition that served the privileged few, and developed through newly invented machines and processes into mass production for a consumer society.

In a sense, all three exhibitions are based on the machine--either its dominating presence or its absence. Bent wood and metal furniture offer evidence of what master designers could coax out of modern machinery and of what men and machines working together were capable of. Arts & Crafts or Art Nouveau objects were lovingly created by artists and craftsmen, largely by hand, in defiance of the machines that threatened to take over and destroy time-honored work and work habits.

The **Bent Wood and Metal Furniture** exhibition, organized by the American Federation of Arts to travel to major American museums, prompted Cleveland Museum staff to mount the two related shows. Drawn from the Museum collection and from local private and public collections, these accompanying exhibitions seek--as the Museum's complementary shows always do--to enlarge the experience of Museum visitors by commenting on and adding to the ideas of the major traveling exhibition.

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